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Michael Bacon takes over as WMPG-FM director

By BETH RUSSELL
Free Press Staff

VISION, says Peter Twichell, former station manager of WMPG-FM, is the most notable difference between he and newly elected manager Michael Bacon.

"I think [Bacon] will be more daring and more creative with the station," concedes Twichell, "With his vision of what alternative radio ought to be, he is always looking for new programming."

Bacon, a soft-spoken man in his early 40s, brings years of radio broadcasting experience to WMPG. A veteran of "an excellent alternative radio station" at the University of Pennsylvania, he describes

WMPG as an adolescent "on the edge of puberty. Speaking in psychological terms," says Bacon, "it's in its latency period. It's confused. It doesn't know whether to be a totally amateurish, anything-goes station or a more professional student/community station."

Although Bacon's vision leans more towards the latter, he feels that a "professionally raw" format, or one that combines the best of both, would be ideal.

"WMPG should be more than just a fun place to hang out," he says, and more than just another college station "poking adolescent

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"This has always been a source of tension," claims Twichell, "because it has never been defined. We're trying to find the bounds between student broadcasting and

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fun at someone else's expense."

On the other hand, he does not want WMPG to become so polished that it sounds like a commercial radio station.

"Commercial radio," says Bacon with distaste, "is banal and WMPG should strive not to be banal."

As always, alternate music will be the backbone of WMPG, if anything, Bacon reassures listeners,

taste.

"We have to stay away from bad language and irresponsible editorializing," he says, but "some programming is bound to offend listeners."

Bacon worries that it may be the standards of USM administrators and not those of the FCC, that will be more difficult to gauge.

"They (the audience) may tune into a program where women are talking about their issues and these

"I don't believe they gave us the money so that they could keep an eye on us."
—P. Twichell

there will be more of it. Interspersed with music, he says, will be more programming most people consider boring but [that is] dedicated to issues that concern the community."

Bacon feels WMPG should be open to minority groups such as the gay/lesbian community, because they are isolated and rarely represented by public media.

"Who's going to represent them? Nobody," says Bacon. "They have to create their own media."

Both Bacon and Twichell are wringing their hands over the anticipated power increase from 50 to 1,000 watts. With the approval of the student senate, Twichell has been hired to guide WMPG through the upgrading process.

As station adviser, his duties include, writing training manuals, retraining existing staff members, and working along with the executive board to determine the role of WMPG as a student/community station. Careful adherence to FCC standards is uppermost on the minds of both men.

Bacon claims the FCC does not squelch activity, but does insist that programming be done in good

women may be lesbians," he says, adding, "if someone complains, what is the university going to say? If we're dealing with issues in a very open, candid manner are we going to be pressured not to do this if it makes some listeners uncomfortable?"

He adds, optimistically, that "the university may well say, 'free speech really matters' and WMPG should continue to broadcast these sorts of programs. I really don't know how they (USM) will react."

Twichell is convinced that as long as WMPG produces responsible programming, the university will not interfere. Asked whether a gift of \$9,000 from President Woodbury to the station, was unconditional, Twichell says yes.

"I don't believe they gave us the money so that they could keep an eye on us. I think it was really a statement to our [WMPG] commitment to responsible broadcasting."

However, the increase in wattage, says Twichell, will require both the university and WMPG "to look at the radio station in a different light. It's not a small student group anymore or a radio club...it's growing. The impact of what will be happen-

ing to
Bacon, "and it is
rarely used to its potential. Radio,
like life, is becoming homogenized,"
he laments.

"Something with a little flesh
on it, a little edge to it, hard to
find."